Pride Month ’21: Xbox Ambassadors Share Their Stories

Community Fifthpaw Jun 1, 2021

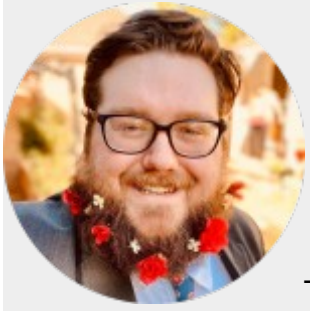
Hey, it’s Pride Month! Highlighting and amplifying community voices is core to the Xbox Ambassadors community. So, in celebration, we asked those who identify as LGBTQIA+ how games with diverse representation have impacted them and to share their own stories about being a member of a gaming community.

We received hundreds of responses and, with much consideration, selected the following to share.

And here they are:

YODAGREENCRAYON

Pansexual, he/him



This is a timely one! Today (at the time of story submission) we are talking about Mass Effect (with the Legendary Edition releasing in a week). When I first started playing the first Mass Effect, I was

not out but was curious and on my first play through I played a straight man romancing Liara.

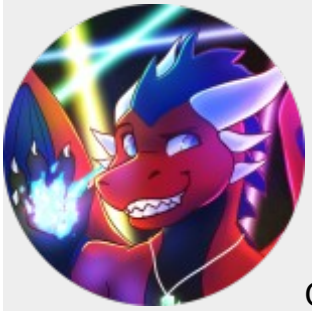
However, as I played and replayed the entire Mass Effect trilogy, I found myself comfortable in playing as a male romancing Kaiden or a female romancing Liara, and so on. This was an early test to see my comfortability in engaging in same-sex flirting and same-sex physical/non-physical romances. I was comfortable in any romance at some point and Mass Effect honestly helped uncover my pansexual identity because, from early on, all romance options were truly viable and it let me explore that to an extent.

And while there is plenty of negativity in gaming communities surrounding LGBT+ characters or choices (take The Last of Us 2 backlash for example), there have been small communities of genuinely fantastic LGBT people, allies, etc that come together to just love a game.

I'd like to point at Life is Strange for this where you, in game, can choose a more romantic or more platonic relationship with Chloe as Max while never being egregious. It did not completely define either character, it simply existed. Normalization is a huge step in any community's path to the mainstream and this was a game I looked to as a shining example of a great and supportive community supporting the characters regardless.

CINDERGHOSTS

Bisexual, he/him



Games featuring LGBTQIA+ characters make me feel like I'm real and accepted in the world. To put it in a way, the normalcy that a lot of games such as Mass Effect, Fallout, or even The Sims and League of Legends portray LGBTQIA+ characters in puts such a good feeling in me knowing that these people are just like me and just like real people.

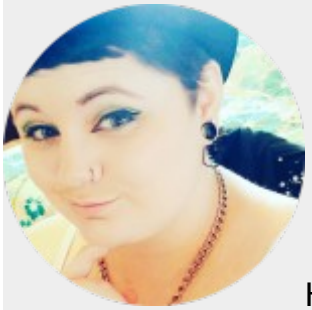
Not everyone is the same cut and copy, just like how we are in real life. I think my one story I'd love to share is rather small and short but it was the realization I had one day while staring at myself in the mirror just before sitting down to play Mass Effect. It just hit me that I related to Commander Shepard in so many ways including my recent discovery of my bisexuality and how that was always why I could never choose between which characters to date regardless of their gender in the game. Garrus and Tali for

the win by the way, but Ashley always has a special place in my Shepard's heart.

Ever since, I've taken deeper steps into the gaming community and found so many people who are just like me. A lot of my online friends who I've met from games are bisexual just like me! I guess we are just drawn to become friends from that shared similarity before we even know it. I wish I had a quote from some character of a game to relate that to, maybe Apex's Wattson would have a good electricity-related remark for that. But the way that I met all these amazing people who love and accept me is just a feeling I never want replaced.

WAFFLEQUEEN3739

Non-binary polyamorous pansexual, they/them/theirs



Having inclusivity in games like Apex Legends, which I play frequently, has really opened my eyes to how open and accepting the gaming world has become to the LGBTQIA+ community.

I have had to come out to my family on 4 separate occasions about different aspects of my life relating to LGBTQIA+ matters. Many times, I would hear the toxicity in game chats like "get back in the kitchen, b****", "girls can't play video games,", "they/them aren't pronouns, I'll just call you 'it'", etc. As I saw more and more representation in games like Apex Legends, I was able to push back a lot of these toxic comments with "would you say that to your family member if they looked to this same game we are playing as the only place they found solace?"

Sometimes it would spark up an open-minded conversation and other times it would lead to tears and finding myself having to mute my squad mates.

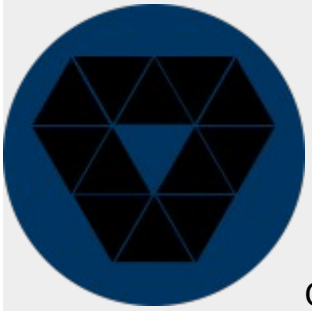
But having more and more Legends get released with LGBTQIA+ representation gives me hope that one day people will be more accepting of the LGBTQIA+ community. I have been lucky to get teamed up with people who could hear me trying to work on lowering my voice so it wouldn't sound so feminine and ask me my pronouns. We would be able to get along in that way and I would be able to smile and say, "I had a great time playing! Wanna squad up again sometime?" and most times that answer would be a profound "YES!"

Being nonbinary, pansexual, and polyamorous isn't always easy to explain to people. I've made it a joke for myself that "It's obvious- I'm a Pokemon trainer who can't make decisions. Because I just want to 'catch 'em all'!"

I think that so many times we, as humans, forget that everyone else is human. That inside we are all the same. And that some things like who we love, who we choose to say "I love you" to at the end of the day gets so scrutinized by society when we all just want to be loved by someone. And sometimes that someone is the same gender, has no gender, has multiple genders, or even have multiple "someones". All that matters is that we are loved, we are cared for, and appreciated by this partner/these partners. Other than that, why hate on someone you don't even know?

JANGOOSED

Gay, he/him



Growing up in a homophobic area and battling with my sexuality for my entire youth, I sought escape in the one thing I really enjoyed: video games. The one that always comes to mind for me is Borderlands 2 and how LGBTQIA+ representation is handled there.

I was 13 when I first played Borderlands 2 and Moxxi initially stood out as the most obviously bisexual character. And being a 13 year old still figuring myself out, this was huge for me as I hadn't seen it much in games prior. After playing more and really getting into all of the story and side quests, I'll never forget the side quest "Doctor's Orders" that has dialogue between the main villain Handsome Jack and a random character, Doctor Samuels, where Jack threatens to kill her wife.

Even though Doctor Samuels was a random side character with zero back story, the fact that she had a wife stood out to me and really helped me realize that LGBTQIA+ people are everywhere and aren't always obvious/stand out – this immediately helped me feel a lot less alone. Having no family/teachers/friends to talk to about it, I held onto this.

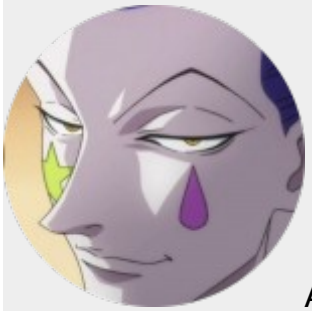
After learning about Doctor Samuels, I quickly learnt about other characters being LGBTQIA+ and was surprised at how many there were: Axton, Hammerlock, Mr. Torgue, and Tannis to name a few. Hammerlock was already my favorite character, but learning this ranked him that much

higher! I grew up under a lot of negative impressions of LGBTQIA+ people – eventually myself as well. But Borderlands 2 helped me realize that we're just normal people like everyone else with one minor difference which doesn't affect who we are, what we do, anything.

I've been really involved with the Halo community for over six years and have been helping moderate some Halo communities, with the most important to me being the Halo speedrunning community. In my six and a half years in this community, I've had a single negative interaction with one person regarding my sexuality which didn't go further than that initial interaction because of how genuinely awesome everyone else in the community is- they stuck up for me immediately. I'd almost consider the Halo speedrunning community as a second family with how we have treated each other for as long as I can remember.

WIINDCHIILL

Gay, he/him



As a gay man, it feels good to see representation in video games. Growing up, I only saw straight characters but now that there are more and more inclusive games, it is nice to know that younger gamers will start to see that even if they feel "different" that it's okay. Even being able to create a character that represents who you are and to be able to have a story that displays gay relationships allows us to see that in the world of gaming, everyone is welcome.

However, I'm gay so I often I do feel outcast in many gaming communities as there is, sadly, still a lot of toxic players. This is not always the case, though! I played GTA V with an amazing crew from all over the world for years and we became nothing short of a family. We shared so much together: joy, laughter, sorrow, marriages, and even death…. but we were always there for each other no matter how far away.

When the "mother" of our group, PrincessLUCY27 passed away, we all gathered into a GTA V lobby and had a proper send off, complete with a pink hearse, suits, ties, and over 20 people who, in some way, were touched by her beautiful soul. As we fired our flares, fireworks, and guns into the air, we all knew that our crew would never be the same but we always would have in common the fact that we were brought together by her unconditional and

accepting love. I still keep in touch with some of the crew to this day and a few even came to my wedding when I married my husband. In a world that can be dark and scary people often turn to games to find an escape… I found a family instead.

WARLORDOVERDRIV

Pansexual, he/him

It feels great that game developers actually acknowledge their LGBTQIA+ community. While I have not personally played any games featuring these characters, I have played with some of my other fellow gamers who are a part of the community in games such as GTA Online, Call of Duty, etc. We have always had a blast.

I have even taken an in-game photo once of me and another friend who is a part of the community (think of a virtual selfie)! We had a lot of fun that day and I always love being able to get together with people, both new friends and old ones, and find a game we can enjoy together.

I also follow a couple of LGBTQIA+ Clubs on Xbox and while I am not as active in them anymore, one local gaming community I am a part of and enjoy quite a lot is called Charlotte Gaymers Network, based out of Charlotte, NC and the surrounding areas.

We love to get together and host game nights and we always have such a blast! I remember the first time I attended a game night; I was extremely shy because I had never been to an actual LGBTQIA+ event outside of a virtual platform, not even a Pride Festival or anything. So, it was a new experience for me, especially since I had only known the people who had attended via both their Facebook page and their Discord server, both of which I am a part of.

By the end of the night, I felt like I was a part of their family circle of sorts and it was so much fun being able to play Super Smash Bros, Mortal Kombat, D&D, and whatnot with them. I look forward to being able to attend another game night with CGN.

UN3SM

Bisexual, he/him

One of my favorite examples of representation in video games is Life is Strange. Back when the game dropped, I could totally relate to the main character Max Caulfield on a level that I never experienced before and I play story driven games a lot.

Ever since I was a teen, I always had these question and confusions about myself. It wasn't bothering me too much but the thoughts would come to my mind time to time. Even my friends who played the game were like, "Dude, Max is totally you."

Of course, we all were talking about her personality and behavior but deep down I knew there was more than that, even though I was scared to accept it. I kept telling myself you're just confused for a long while. Fast forward to last year I was talking to a wonderful friend of mine, you know that type of friend you are not scared to share your deepest darkest secrets with. I told her everything from my feeling of attraction to same gender to experiences that I had and genuinely enjoyed but never talked about with anyone.

She comforted me and told me about her own experiences and turns out we're both bisexuals. Wonderfully, I decided to come out to my close friend circle just to realize four of my close friends are actually bisexuals and they all have guessed it before I even realize it myself. Now I feel comfortable enough to talk about it on the internet and of course in addition to my wholesome friends, Dontnod's Life is Strange really helped me discover my identity under LGBTQ flag.

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Thank you once again to everyone for sharing their stories. We understand it is not always easy to share personal experiences publicly, so we really do appreciate every single one.

Happy Pride Month!